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Which cultural aspects influence effective leadership of Western managers in Africa and how do they cope with these aspects to enhance their leadership in this cross-cultural setting? Examining the perceptions of Western managers in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Africa is increasingly becoming an attractive destination for international business endeavors. Consequently, the expansion of global business operations necessitates Western managers to engage with diverse and often distant cultures, including those found in Africa. This thesis presents the outcomes of an exploratory qualitative study involving nine Western managers predominantly Belgians, who oversee local teams in Uganda. It aims to explore the cultural dynamics encountered by these Western managers in this African country. Uganda, noted as a promising business destination, serves as the focal point in this study due to a lack of prior research on the cultural differences encountered by Western managers when leading local teams in the country. Furthermore, the study also examines the strategies these managers employ to cope with the various cultural aspects they perceive in the Ugandan work environment.

The central research question guiding this study is: *“Which cultural aspects influence the effective leadership of Western managers in Africa, and how do they cope with these aspects to enhance their leadership in this cross-cultural setting? Examining the perceptions of Western managers in Uganda.”*

Trough in-depth interviews this study identified key cultural aspects of the Ugandan work environment as perceived by Western managers. These aspect include differences in hierarchical preferences, levels of collectivism among peers, perceptions of time, perceptions towards work efficiency, communication styles, workplace protocol, and tolerance for mistakes. Next, from these discussions, a range of coping strategies emerged, shedding light on how Western managers cope with these cultural aspects. These strategies encompass: fostering an innovative mindset and horizontal decision-making among local staff, creating a safe work environment, adjusting to communication styles, building personal relationships, mitigating differences in time orientation and managing expectations.

These findings offer valuable insights for future Western managers leading local teams, serving as a guide to increase cultural awareness and navigate differences effectively. The study underscores the importance of cultural preparation and the need to avoid assuming that Western management practices can be universally applied without adaptation.

Keywords - cross-cultural management, Uganda, intercultural dynamics, Sub-Saharan Africa, adaptation and adjustment, Western management, leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Many proclaim that Africa is the future of tomorrow. I personally assert that Africa is the future of today. As Punnett highlights, the African continent holds boundless opportunities, particularly in business and beyond. Numerous individuals from various corners of the world, with diverse backgrounds, are anticipated to find themselves on African soil for work (Punnett, 2016). In the context of a globalizing world, the concept of international business, encompassing economic activities transcending nation-states, with trade and foreign investment being paramount, holds significant importance (Guillen, 2001). This is especially evident as numerous organizations are directing their investments into Africa through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with FDI into African countries reaching a record high of \$83 billion in 2021, notably surging in Southern, East, and West Africa (UNCTAD, 2022).

Moreover, international business fosters cross-cultural environments, where cultures blend. For instance, Western managers find themselves in companies located in Africa, leading local teams, creating a mixed culture environment. Culture impacts leadership in such environments, therefore scholars stress the need to consider cultural aspects in management and leadership. Their insights underscore the intricate nature of cultural factors, emphasizing the need to navigate and incorporate these elements to foster effective leadership practices within the African context (Gray, 2008). Additionally, research emphasizes that leadership effectiveness is culturally contingent (Walumbwa et al., 2011), gaining relevance as Western managers lead local teams in Africa.

However, which cultural aspects influence the leadership of Western managers in Africa, and how do Western managers cope with these to enhance effective leadership in this cross-cultural setting? This master's thesis delves into these questions by providing an answer to the research question: *“Which cultural aspects influence the effective leadership of Western managers in Africa, and how do they cope with these aspects to enhance effective leadership in this cross-cultural setting? Examining the perceptions of Western managers in Uganda.”*

Despite various research studies on the role and influence of culture on leadership and management in America, Europe and Asia (Wanasika et al., 2011; Vance & McNulty, 2014), the existing literature concerning cultures and management provides limited insights into the cross-cultural leadership experience on the African continent. On top of that, this research addresses a notable gap by focusing on the perceptions of Western managers leading in African contexts and focuses on the country Uganda, as no study has looked at the cultural perceptions of Western managers in Uganda (George, 2015). The focus on Uganda is driven by its impressive economic growth as evidenced by its GDP. It's recognized as a key business destination, ranking among Africa's top ten countries for attracting significant Foreign Direct

Investment (FDI) projects, according to UNCTAD's 2016 report (UNCTAD, 2016). Recent data reveals a substantial increase in FDI, jumping by 39% to \$1.5 billion in 2022, largely due to investments in extractive industries (UNCTAD, 2023). Moreover, Uganda has been acclaimed as the most appealing African country for expatriates, according to the Expatriate Insider Survey (InterNations, 2016).

Therefore, the study aims to shed light on the unique cultural differences as perceived by Western managers working in this developing country. By understanding which cultural aspects influence leadership and identifying how to cope with these aspects, this thesis offers practical recommendations for improving leadership within organizations on African soil. These recommendations will assist prospective Western managers engaged in professional activities in Africa, in increasing awareness about cultural differences and enhancing their leadership effectiveness in leading African, more precisely Ugandan teams. Having undertaken my internship in Uganda through a Belgian organization, I can affirm the significance of grasping cultural differences for effective leadership and seamless collaboration with local staff. To integrate successfully into the African work environment, Western business leaders must grasp the cultural expectations placed upon them. Regrettably, many Westerners enter the African work environment without sufficient knowledge of the host culture, resulting in numerous misunderstandings.

This thesis aims to illuminate this topic by examining the perspectives of various Western managers. It commences with an in-depth literature review starting with an overall economic outlook depicting the presence of Western managers in Africa. Next, it delves into frameworks and definitions pertaining to culture and leadership. It then examines cultural differences between African and Western managerial culture and work environments as discussed in the literature that may affect leadership effectiveness. Afterwards, it introduces adaptation strategies, such as the concept of crossvergence and other coping strategies to enhance effective leadership of Western managers in Africa. Subsequently, the empirical section unfolds, outlining the methodology, which involves the presentation of the data collection method comprising nine interviews with Western managers in Uganda. The participants predominantly have Belgian backgrounds and are responsible for leading local teams in Uganda. The ensuing section delves into the results, leading to a discussion and resolution of the research questions, intertwining theoretical insights from the literature with perspectives of interviewed Western managers. Ultimately the research concludes with managerial recommendations, outlines limitations, and potential avenues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This first section of the thesis comprises the literature review, intending to encompass the knowledge highlighted in literature surrounding this topic. It begins by providing an overview of the economic outlook of Africa, necessary for the reader to understand the economic context of this research. Next it depicts definitions of culture and delves into a crucial cultural model: the Hofstede model. In this segment, the Hofstede model is employed as a lens through which cultural differences between Western and African management practices are examined, encompassing relevant dimensions such as power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity and uncertainty avoidance. Subsequently, leadership definitions highlighted in the literature related to this topic are discussed. Following this, the thesis delves into the crux of the subject by addressing the cultural aspects of African and Western management practices highlighted in the literature, examining their disparities and influence on leadership effectiveness in Africa. Additionally the literature review explores the concept of crossvergence and discusses coping strategies. Finally it concludes with a summary of the key takeaways derived from the literature study.

Chapter 1: Western managers in Africa - Economic outlook

For a long time, the Western world didn't fully grasp Africa's economic potential. While the continent does face issues and political instability, it also offers Western leaders a myriad of opportunities. Recently, some African countries have seen significant economic growth, catching the interest of international businesses looking for new markets and investments. Industries like mining, with abundant resources like gold, diamonds, and copper, and the expanding telecommunications sector are particularly promising (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). The oil sector too stands out as one of Africa's most encouraging industries. These facts are making Western companies and individuals rethink their stereotypes and global strategies (Amoako-Agyei, 2009).

Additionally, as indicated by a UN Migration Report, the increasing trade interactions between the African continent and the rest of the world have led to a growing presence of expatriates in the region. Between 2000 and 2017, the expatriate population in Africa grew by an average of approximately 3.0 percent per annum (UNCTAD, 2018). Nonetheless it is worth noting that Africa's economic trajectory is intertwined with its colonial history. Historically, many Europeans concentrated their efforts in African countries, exerting significant social and economic influence (Park, 2009). However, in contemporary times, European expatriates arriving in Africa are primarily driven by economic opportunities rather than ideological motives or historical ties. In the pursuit of this thesis research, predominant engagement has been in interviews with Western managers who oversee teams operating in Uganda, often referred to as the “*Pearl of Africa*”. The focal point of this study is thus Uganda, a former British colony. Situated strategically in East Africa, Uganda enjoys access

to an East African market comprising over 283 million consumers (Godfrey, 2023). Various key sectors thrive within the country, including agriculture, infrastructure, construction, logistics, technology, and energy. Notably, the recent discovery of substantial reserves of oil and gas is poised to further enhance Uganda's appeal to foreign investors and businesses (Hickey & Izama, 2016). This discovery brings forth a range of opportunities, making Uganda an appealing prospect for both businesses and investors.

Moreover, the economy of Uganda is experiencing steady growth, averaging 6% annually, and is characterized by a burgeoning young population. On top of that, Uganda has emerged as a favored destination for business, ranking among the top ten countries in Africa attracting the highest number of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects (UNCTAD, 2016).

As evidenced, the economic landscape of Africa, including nations such as Uganda, has experienced a notable shift, capturing the interest of Western businesses and individuals. Additionally, the increasing presence of Western expatriates in African countries like Uganda is fostering cross-cultural environments. Thus, acquiring a thorough understanding of the diverse cultures and cross-cultural environments across Africa, and adeptly utilizing this comprehension, are indispensable factors for managers striving for success on the continent (Rarick et al., 2013).

Chapter 2: Cultural dimensions framework and leadership definitions

2.1 Hofstede Model

To comprehend the research question, it is essential to grasp the concept of culture. As previously mentioned, understanding diverse cultures is crucial for effective leadership in a cross-cultural setting.

But, what does *culture* actually entail? Within the literature, various definitions exist and some accurate ones are the one defined by Hofstede;

He conceptualizes culture as: *“the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”*(Hofstede, 1980).

And another definition defined by Matsumoto;

He defines culture as: *“the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next”* (Matsumoto, 1999).

It is crucial to emphasize that while culture is invariably carried by a group, it can manifest differently on an individual level. Therefore, understanding these group dynamics and individual variations is vital for effective cross-cultural leadership.

Another lens through which culture can be understood is the Hofstede model, commonly known as the 4-dimensions model. This renowned framework distinguishes national cultures and facilitates mutual understanding among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The four dimensions of this model are:

- Power Distance
- Individualism versus Collectivism
- Masculinity versus Femininity
- Uncertainty Avoidance

Although two more dimensions, Long-term Orientation and Indulgence versus Restraint, were later introduced, this section will focus on illustrating the four primary dimensions as they have more empirical support (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Rarick et al., 2013). Practical examples of these four dimensions will be provided for two countries: Belgium and Uganda.

Moreover, this thesis selected the Hofstede model for its widely recognized reputation and credibility. Additionally, the model is tailored to leadership in cross-cultural settings and has extensive and accessible data available for various countries, allowing for comparative analysis. This availability of data facilitates the research examination of Western managers' perceptions in Uganda by providing a basis for comparison between them. Importantly, it was the only cultural model found in the literature to be examined for Uganda, given the lack of empirically-based research on the cultural classification of this country (Rarick et al., 2013). Thus, this research deemed it most appropriate to use the four dimensions of the Hofstede model as a cultural comparison tool.

Power Distance

This first dimension “Power Distance”, assesses the extent to which individuals in a society with lower power are willing to acknowledge and foresee an uneven distribution of power (Hofstede, 1980). In countries where this power distance is significant, there is a value placed on hierarchy and inequality. Managers tend to favor autocratic management methods and do not communicate with their employees on an equal footing.

Examining a Western nation such as Belgium, where a majority of respondents in this research are expected to come from, it is observed through Hofstede's online tool that Belgium scores high on the Power Distance Index (PDI), with an index equal to 65 (Country Comparison Tool, 2023). This means that there is a significant acceptance of hierarchical order and authority in Belgian society.

In Uganda, an African country where the majority of this study's respondents are located, Hofstede's online tool couldn't be used for Uganda since it was not one of the countries included in Hofstede's original studies. However, one study by Rarick replicated the Hofstede study for Uganda using the same Hofstede values survey. Rarick's data indicates that Uganda has a PDI score of 38, characterizing it as a country with a low power distance, meaning that there is less acceptance of hierarchical order and authority in Ugandan society (Rarick et al., 2013).

Individualism versus Collectivism

The second dimension is Individualism versus Collectivism. Individualism measures the degree to which individuals prioritize their own interests, as opposed to Collectivism, which gauges how closely people identify with a group. A high score on this dimension indicates a preference for a loosely-knit social structure where individuals are expected to care primarily for themselves (Hofstede, 1980). Managers hailing from individualist nations typically value individual achievement. In contrast, collectivists prioritize the cohesion of the group over individual interests.

Belgium registers a significantly high score on the Individualism Index, boasting a score of 81 (Country Comparison Tool, 2023). Conversely, Uganda has a score of 30. This score implies that Ugandans lean towards collectivism in their nature (Rarick et al., 2013).

Masculinity versus Femininity - Motivation towards achievement

Another dimension is the Masculinity versus Femininity dimension, which was later renamed as "Motivation towards Achievement and Success" (MAS). The Masculinity aspect within this dimension reflects a societal orientation towards values such as achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and the pursuit of material rewards for success. In such cultures, there tends to be a more competitive atmosphere, with an emphasis placed on striving for success and standing out from others. In contrast, Femininity represents a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak, and a focus on the quality of life. That society tends to be more consensus-oriented (Hofstede, 1980).

With an average score of 54, Belgium exhibits an intermediate stance on Motivation towards Achievement and Success (MAS). Similarly, Uganda records an intermediate MAS score of 57. This score indicates that Ugandan culture slightly leans towards masculinity rather than femininity (Rarick et al., 2013).

Uncertainty Avoidance

Next, the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension indicates the extent to which individuals within a society experience discomfort in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede, 1980).

Belgium boasts one of the top scores on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), securing a score of 94. A high score on the UAI dimension suggests that Belgian society tends to have a strong preference for rules, regulations, and structured situations, reflecting a lower tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Country Comparison Tool, 2023).

Conversely, Uganda has a lower score of 56, indicating a relatively reduced tendency for uncertainty avoidance in Ugandan culture (Rarick et al., 2013). Teams and managers in Uganda may be more comfortable with ambiguity and may exhibit greater flexibility and adaptability in uncertain situations. This cultural trait could encourage risk-taking within teams.

Dimension	Belgium	Uganda
Power Distance	65	38
Individualism vs Collectivism	81	30
Masculinity vs Femininity	54	57
Uncertainty Avoidance	94	56

Table 1: Summary of the scores obtained for the cultural dimensions in Belgium and Uganda based on both Hofstede's insights and Rarick's research (Country Comparison Tool, 2023; Rarick et al., 2013).

2.2 Leadership Definitions

Having clarified the concept of culture, it is equally important to understand the concept of leadership in this thesis. Since this research aims to explore the cultural aspects that influence Western managers in their leadership when leading local teams in Uganda.

According to Gary Yukl leadership is defined as: *“the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”*(Yukl, 2006).

Additionally, Peter Northouse defines leadership as: *“a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”*(Northouse, 2010).

These definitions provide a foundational understanding as the thesis proceeds to examine the interplay between culture and leading local teams in the context of Western managers in Uganda.

Chapter 3: Cultural aspects influencing leadership in an African work context

3.1 Hofstede cultural aspects influencing leadership

The forthcoming section explores Hofstede's cultural dimensions concerning Western and African management practices and their potential impact on leadership effectiveness in Africa, drawing from existing literature. The emphasis is on investigating which cultural

differences between African and Western managerial practices and work environments exist that may influence the leadership effectiveness of Western managers in Africa. This discussion centers on the pertinent dimensions highlighted in the literature, namely power distance and individualism versus collectivism. Additionally, it briefly addresses literature findings concerning a less researched dimension, uncertainty avoidance.

3.1.1 Power distance

The first cultural dimension highlighted in the literature and explored by Hofstede that affects leadership in an African context is power distance. Scholar Whyte underscores a noteworthy distinction between the African and Western managerial culture, positing that power distance is more pronounced in African organizations (Whyte, 2018). The managerial culture in Africa emphasizes reverence for hierarchy and strict adherence to authority figures and their directives (Wanasika, et al, 2011). This observation is supported by Iguisi, who characterizes managerial leadership in African society as paternalistic and hierarchical in response to this heightened power distance (Iguisi, 2014). According to Iguisi, this form of leadership aligns closely with the prevailing culture in Africa and holds the potential to enhance managerial effectiveness and workers' productivity (Iguisi, 2014).

Nevertheless, Kuada introduces a counter perspective, contending that African management styles may be influenced by paternalism and patronage, potentially resulting in limited organizational commitment among employees (Kuada, 2010). Furthermore, he argues that the prevalence of autocratic leadership styles in African organizations could impede employee empowerment, thereby constraining effective leadership. This presents a contrasting viewpoint on the influence of power distance on leadership practices in Africa.

Cultural elements shaping power dynamics

To achieve a comprehensive understanding, diverse cultural factors contribute to power dynamics in African managerial culture. For instance, the influence of age and authority, along with the expectation for leaders to fulfill paternal responsibilities, all play significant roles in shaping power dynamics within African organizations.

Regarding *age and authority*, Beugré asserts the significance of an individual's age in Africa, emphasizing that greater age commands increased respect. This stems from the African belief in a strong correlation between age and wisdom (Beugré, 2001). An advanced age is inherently associated with business acumen, authority, and higher ranking, shaping the power distance culture in Africa (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). This cultural trait, while less emphasized in Western cultures, significantly influences the dynamics of power within African organizational structures.

In the context of *paternal leadership*, a prevalent leadership style in African cultures, especially in authoritarian settings, is highlighted. In organizational contexts, African leaders often assume a fatherly role, creating a structure within organizations that mirrors familial dynamics. African firms are commonly described as being structured like families, and organizational leaders are expected to bear paternal responsibilities toward their staff members. In African organizations, employees anticipate leaders offering guidance not only on work-related matters but also on personal issues—a characteristic less prominent in Western businesses. The leaders in African companies adopt a parental approach, demonstrating a considerable concern for group harmony and displaying a keen interest in both professional and personal well-being (Beugré, 2001).

3.1.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

The second prominent cultural dimension emphasized in the literature and examined by Hofstede, which impacts leadership in an African context, is Individualism versus Collectivism. Guma notes that, in contrast to the prevalent collectivist culture in African management, Western managerial culture tend to be more self-serving and individualistic (Guma, 2012). This is in the literature one of the most fundamental cultural differences between African and Western organizations. Shamba asserts that the emphasis on individualism, as mentioned earlier, faced strong rejection from African employees (Shamba, 2008). Similarly, Nwagbara highlights a significant concern about the replication of Western management and leadership models in non-Western environments, particularly in Africa, where such models may not align with the communalistic leadership culture that is prevalent (Nwagbara, 2012).

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the importance of communal elements within African communities, as community holds a central position in Africa. Michaud clarifies that this understanding of community involves being mindful of others and their interests, actively striving to avoid encroaching upon others, as such actions would run counter to the collective community (Michaud et al., 2020). He underscores that a community-centered approach is a crucial aspect of leadership in Africa.

Next, Whyte, introducing the concept of ubuntu, meaning “I am a human because of another human”, suggests that African communities often feel a strong obligation to care for one another. In one of his studies in Nigeria, he observed that the nuclear family size and number of dependents of managers from Nigerian companies exceeded half the amount of those from the Italian company (Whyte, 2018). Supporting this notion, Karsten and Illa, assert that management in Africa operates as a system of reciprocal social relationships, with family at its core (Karsten & Illa, 2005). Consequently, relationships emerge as a crucial and integral

aspect of African management, shaping the dynamics of leadership and emphasizing the interconnectedness.

However, Kuada observes some negative aspects endorsed by these African kinship relationships, notably a form of reciprocity that approaches alter centrism. In this scenario, one person assumes obligations towards another person without expecting any obligations in return. This dynamic can result in a lack of accountability and responsibility in the workplace (Kuada, 2006).

Mbigi introduces another enhancing dimension to the collective nature of African management, emphasizing that, due to the collective orientation in leadership, individual needs find fulfillment when considered in a collective context. As a result, he asserts that team rewards hold a higher priority over individual interests, rewards, and benefits. In a collectivist society, incentivizing individuals independently may lead to social censure and sabotage of performance (Mbigi, 2000).

Further, Mbigi elaborates on the distinctive features of African leadership, highlighting its inclination towards a collective decision-making process that prioritizes compromise, persuasion, and discussion over individualistic decision-making (Mbigi, 2000). Additionally, Booysen agrees that within African organizations, the focal point revolves around collective decision-making, actively discouraging individualistic competition. Instead, there is a pronounced emphasis on fostering conformity, collaboration, and cooperation (Booyesen, 1999). Whyte shares this perspective, emphasizing the cultural values of communalism and collectivism that shape leadership in Africa. He observes that African management practices prioritize collective decision-making, prioritizing the group's interests over individual interests (Whyte, 2018).

Overall, the literature highlights the importance of understanding the communalistic culture prevalent in African work environments emphasizing it as a crucial element of leadership in an African work environment.

3.1.3 Uncertainty avoidance

As previously highlighted, literature extensively covers the differences in Hofstede's dimensions of power distance, individualism and collectivism, emphasizing cultural differences between African and Western managerial practices and work environments. However, there is less focus on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Beugré makes a general distinction between Western and African cultures, stating that, in general, Western cultures—though there are exceptions—tend to focus on dominating and controlling nature. They often try to change and manage their environment to fit their needs, making them more risk-taking.

In contrast, Beugré notes that African cultures are more risk-averse and tend to avoid uncertainty. This tendency stems from traditional African values, which do not encourage change and promote accepting things as they are without questioning them. Blind obedience to authority is also a notable characteristic of these cultures (Beugré, 2010). Another notable African characteristic is strong religion, and Hofstede posits that countries with strong religious backgrounds demonstrate high uncertainty avoidance indices (Hofstede, 1980). Expanding on this, Jaeger explores this topic further in the context of organizational management. Using Hofstede's dimensions, he found that developing countries, which include many African nations, exhibit relatively high uncertainty avoidance compared to developed countries, which are predominantly Western (Jaeger, 1990).

3.2 Other cultural aspects influencing leadership

This section accentuates additional cultural aspects beyond those mentioned earlier, which were identified as distinctions between Western and African managerial culture.

3.2.1 View of Human

Kuada provides a significant distinction in the contrasting perspectives of Western and African management regarding their perception of individuals. He characterizes the Western management approach as adopting an “*instrumental view*”, wherein individuals are perceived as resources or means to an end. In contrast, the African perspective places emphasis on a “*humanistic view*”, recognizing individuals as possessing intrinsic values and valuing individuals for their inherent worth. Kuada suggests that leadership practices in Africa are predominantly humanistic, emphasizing important values such as sharing, regard for negotiation and agreement and fostering positive personal relationships (Kuada, 2010; Jackson, 2002).

3.2.2 View on Communication style

Another critical cultural factor influencing the leadership approach of Western managers in Africa is communication style. Western and African communication styles can diverge substantially, reflecting the diversity of cultures. As previously discussed, African management practices are deeply rooted in community and family, leading to a high-context communication style based on contextual and non-verbal language. This contrasts with low-context communication, a more direct communication style often found in Western countries (Abugre, 2018).

3.2.3 View on Time

Next, the differences in culture between Western and African work environments are also notably evident in their approaches to time management. In Africa, time standards are characterized by ambiguity, necessitating a flexible mindset from non-African managers. Unlike the strict time restrictions and deadlines commonly observed in Western managerial

practices, African work environments operate in a more fluid temporal context (Amoako-Agyei, 2009).

Chapter 4: Cross Cultural Adaptation

Having highlighted the dominant cultural disparities influencing leadership in an African work context, this chapter explores the process of adapting and coping within cross-cultural environments, drawing from various insightful aspects found in the literature.

4.1 Different views in the literature

For long, there prevailed a vision in literature, industry, and schools asserting that Western management ideas and practices are universally applicable. This perspective, known as the “Catching up thesis”, posits that Western management practices serve as a benchmark for measuring management in Africa (Negandhi, 1987). The idea suggests that the closer African management practices align with Western ones, the more efficient their management and leadership becomes (Kuada, 2005). Thus, applying Western managerial culture in an African work context would be deemed the most appropriate in this view. However, many scholars have contradicted this view, emphasizing it as an illusion.

In response to the first perspective, two alternative views emerge, both agreeing on one crucial aspect: Western perspectives on management and leadership do not fully address the needs of African contexts. When Western managers lead in Africa, they cannot simply transplant their Western management theories onto the African landscape. Numerous academics underscore this point, with Iguisi stating that Western management can be counterproductive in African companies (Iguisi, 2014). Mufune builds on this by highlighting that the challenges in developing countries, such as those in Africa, are unique, requiring adaptations of Western management models to fit these distinct challenges (Mufune, 2003). Literature consistently shows that Western models are inadequate: Western perspectives on management do not meet the needs of emerging economies, as eloquently put by Michaud (Michaud et al., 2020). The unacceptance of Western management as universal valid brings two subsequent perspectives in the literature to life namely:

1. Some literature advocates for a radical return to traditional African perspectives, termed by Kuada as “the cultural uniqueness” thesis (Kuada, 2005).
2. Another segment of the literature acknowledges that certain Western perspectives can be highly beneficial in the African landscape. It argues for leveraging and blending meaningful Western perspectives with traditional African viewpoints to achieve a balanced crossvergence of different perspectives (Whyte, 2018).

4.2 Crossvergence as a blended approach to effective leadership

The convergence of Western and African leadership practices, often referred to as crossvergence, is a dynamic process characterized by the integration of diverse cultural management practices. Azungah highlights crossvergence as a transformative phenomenon with the potential to enhance effective leadership by incorporating elements from both Western and African contexts (Azungah et al., 2018). This integration recognizes the need for a nuanced and culturally hybrid perspective on leadership. Whyte contributes to this discourse by presenting a culturally hybrid perspective of leadership that acknowledges the influence of both global and local elements (Whyte, 2018). Kuada, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of building effective leadership not solely on practices imported from the West or exclusively derived from African traditions. He argues that adopting Western management practices without considering African social structures and values may fall short of addressing the aspirations of many Africans. Simultaneously, culturally-inspired management practices rooted in solely African traditions face challenges in effectively tackling the mounting issues in the region. The evolving consensus among African management scholars suggests a recognition that traditional practices alone may not suffice to address contemporary management challenges. This acknowledgment reflects a shift towards embracing crossvergence as a potential solution to the complex interplay between Western and African leadership practices (Kuada, 2005; Kuada 2010).

4.3 Coping strategies

The above segments demonstrate that Western managers wishing to effectively lead in African work environments cannot simply rely on their Western management style or culture, but must also incorporate African aspects into their local leadership. Therefore, Katsikeas suggests that Western expatriates must be open-minded to deal with the unknown and utilize various coping mechanisms in response to cultural differences they may encounter (Katsikeas et al., 2008).

Coping consists of strategies used by Westerners to manage, reduce, or overcome the cultural differences they encounter (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Lazarus and his peers classify coping strategies into either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Problem-focused coping involves directly addressing the source of stress or problem by taking practical steps to solve the issue or change the situation causing stress. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping involves managing the emotions that arise from the stressful situation by regulating the emotional response to it. Examples cited by researcher Stahl for problem-focused coping include controlling the situation by taking initiative, building relationships with local colleagues, and learning about the culture by using host nationals as role models. Examples of emotion-focused coping include emphasizing the positive in a difficult situation and comparing the

host culture positively and negatively with home cultures. Stahl's experiment on coping strategies of expatriates taking on international assignment demonstrates that problem-focused coping strategies were more effective, particularly for expats at higher hierarchical levels and in more culturally distant environments (Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005).

In the context of coping for Western managers in Africa, Abugre emphasizes the importance of demonstrating cross-cultural communication skills as essential for Westerners to successfully cope with different work settings in Africa. He explains that this is achieved by appreciating the communicative styles of local people in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Hence, it's advisable for Western expatriates to recognize and value the visible behaviors and symbolic expressions of Africans, even if they diverge from their Western workplace norms (Abugre, 2018).

Moran elaborates on cross-cultural communication as the dynamic exchange and comprehension of communication norms, cultural values, and interpersonal dynamics, encompassing language and interaction within specific cultural contexts (Moran et al., 2010; Lustig & Koester, 2006). Additionally, Amoako-Agyei contributes that to navigate these differences, Western managers must grasp the disparities in value systems between African and Western cultures. Furthermore Western managers should integrate African business principles such as collective solidarity, paternal leadership, and investing time in building relationships that refrain from transactional views. The effort put into establishing relationships early on will pay off more significantly in the long term than focusing solely on technical skills or industry expertise (Amoako-Agyei, 2009).

Chapter 5: Conclusion of literature review

In conclusion, Africa's economic potential is on the rise, attracting Western managers to the continent. Extensive literature demonstrates that effective leadership in Africa is closely intertwined with cultural dimensions, notably Power Distance and Collectivism. There are significant differences between the hierarchical and collectivist managerial culture in Africa and the comparatively less hierarchical and more individualistic Western managerial culture.

Furthermore, there exists a notable distinction between the instrumental view of individuals in Western management and the humanistic view in African leadership, highlighting the intricacies involved. Additionally, the unique communication style of African leadership, rooted in high-context communication and community bonds, further distinguishes it. Next, there exists a difference in the managerial notion of time between both cultures.

Amidst differing opinions on the applicability of Western management in Africa, the concept of crossvergence emerges as a potential solution. This approach aims to integrate diverse cultural practices, advocating for a culturally hybrid leadership model that blends Western

perspectives with African ones. Such an approach acknowledges the necessity for adaptability and a nuanced understanding of cultural nuances in effective leadership. Furthermore, in this context of adaptation, Western managers use different coping strategies to deal with these cultural differences.

The focus now is to move beyond the theoretical aspects discussed in the literature and delve into the firsthand experiences of Western managers in Africa. The aim is to identify which cultural aspects Western managers perceive, understand their challenges in navigating the duality, and explore how they reconcile and cope with both cultures to lead effectively in an African context.

This research will encapsulate these objectives in two overarching questions: “*Which cultural aspects influence effective leadership in Africa ?*” and “*How do Western managers cope with these aspects to enhance effective leadership in this cross-cultural setting?*” Throughout the following sections, this research will gather the essential elements needed to address these questions.

EMPIRICAL PART

The preceding section delved into the literature review, setting the stage for the empirical study. The objective of this section is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of Western managers, primarily Belgian managers, regarding cultural aspects influencing their leadership in the African context in which they find themselves. Unlike the focus on theory and existing literature in the previous section, this part centers on real experiences from these managers, as this is still a gap in the literature. The aim is to extract insights from their narratives about challenges and success stories, identifying cultural differences that influence their leadership in the host country. Next, the focus is on exploring how these managers cope or have coped with these cultural aspects when leading local teams in this cross-cultural context.

Chapter 6: Research field and methodology

As stated before, this research aims to explore the cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of Western managers' leadership in Uganda and examine strategies for managers to cope with these factors to enhance effective leadership.

After conducting a review of existing literature, which indicated that this subject is not widely studied, this research adopts an exploratory approach, aimed at uncovering new insights and gathering additional information. As Marshall suggests, qualitative research is well-suited for investigating areas where research is scarce or lacking (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). A qualitative approach has thus been employed, allowing for thorough exploration and enabling the discovery as well as comprehension of respondents' perceptions.

A rigorous methodology has been established, involving a total of nine individual interviews with Western managers leading local teams in Uganda. These interviews took place from February till April and were conducted online for convenience.

The table below presents a summary of the interviewed managers, encompassing their managerial position, the nature of their organizations, the geographical location where they lead local teams, and their countries of origin. Furthermore, it includes information regarding the local team size and if applicable, the size of the global team.

Participant	Leadership position	Local Team size (employees)	Global Team size (employees)	Host Country	Country of origin	Experience in host country (years)
1	CEO Film Production Company	7	7	Uganda	Belgium	20
2	Financial Lead Plant Nursery Company	57	1000	Uganda	Belgium	6
3	Country Manager HR Agency	10	200	Uganda	Belgium	12
4	Regional director Pro Bono Law Firm	15	150	Uganda	Belgium	4
5	Country manager Educational International Organization	21	250	Uganda	Belgium	2
6	Country Manager Brewery Company	21	16000	Uganda	USA	4
7	HR Manager Engineering Company	15	5000	Uganda	Belgium	10
8	CEO Sustainable Fruit snack company	6	6	Uganda	Belgium	14
9	Coordination Manager development agency	17	25000	Uganda	Germany	5

Table 2: Profiles nine participants

Furthermore, the strategic selection of managers involved careful consideration of various sectors and levels of experience to ensure a diverse and comprehensive approach. A broad spectrum of managers was chosen, spanning various industries and accommodating both large and small businesses, as well as encompassing profit and non-profit sectors. This approach ensures a diverse array of experiences and perspectives.

Moreover, the selection criteria for these managers were twofold. Firstly, they needed to originate from a Western country and possess managerial experience within that country. In this case, a significant proportion of managers hailed from Belgium, one from the United States and one from Germany. Secondly, they were required to lead a team comprising local individuals and be based in Uganda or have previous experience in leading a local team in Uganda. Despite the slight cultural diversity among the Western managers, it is noteworthy that in this research they share similar opinions regarding the cultural aspects observed in the Ugandan work environment. Thus, the disparity in origin of these managers from various

Western regions did not significantly influence their perceptions of cultural differences in Uganda.

Subsequently, participants were enlisted through a non-probabilistic sampling method, utilizing connections established within personal networks on LinkedIn and WhatsApp, resulting in a convenient sample. The interviews were carried out via Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp, based on the availability and preferences of the participants. The duration of the interviews varied between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 15 minutes, depending on the participants' level of expressiveness, and were recorded with the participants' consent.

Additionally, the research primarily employed semi-structured individual interviews, delving into various cultural aspects that influence leadership. While some of these aspects posed significant challenges, others were comparatively less challenging. The interview guide is available in the appendix (Appendix 1). Open-ended questions were utilized to enable participants to freely share their experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, the interview guide served as a flexible framework, meaning not all questions were asked verbatim and not always in the exact order. Instead, the conversations followed a natural flow.

Following the interviews, a thorough process of transcription and anonymization was conducted to maintain participant confidentiality. Access to the complete transcriptions can be found in the appendix (Appendix 5). To preserve privacy, each participant was assigned a pseudonym ranging from P1 to P9, ensuring the protection of their identities. The qualitative analysis utilized both a thematic approach and narrative analysis, drawing insights from participants' statements. By iteratively coding and grouping data, meaningful concepts emerged, these elements are elaborated upon in the coding scheme provided below.

Cultural aspects influencing leadership of Western managers in Uganda
Preference for Hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for top-down leadership & vertical decision-making • Use of titles and respect for age • Reluctance to speaking up, question authority and being critical • Lack of innovative mindset
Preference for Collectivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative way of working • Harmony in teams • Family spirit • Not setting apart from colleagues
Communication styles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal connection • Giving feedback in group setting • Indirectness
Difference in focus on efficiency
Difference in notion of time

Difference in work formalities
Tolerance for mistakes
Coping strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulating innovative mindset and horizontal decision-making • Creating a safe environment • Adapting communication styles • Building personal relationships • Mitigating time orientation • Expectations management • Cultural adjustment and crossvergence

Table 3: Coding Scheme

Consistently, the same themes and patterns were repeatedly observed after interviewing these nine participants. Therefore, this qualitative research assumes that it reached saturation, for Western managers leading small to midsize local teams in Uganda. The research methodology employed for this thesis has thus enabled the collection of rich data on the cultural aspects influencing Western managers leading local teams in Uganda.

Chapter 7: Results

With the methodology now clearly elucidated, the subsequent section delineates the results of this research. When interviewing the managers on the cultural aspects that influenced their leadership in Uganda, numerous cultural differences emerged. The managers highlighted cultural aspects that were different for them compared to leading a local team in their home countries, particularly within a Western context.

Furthermore, they explained how they cope, or at least attempt to cope with these differences. An overview of the cultural variances is provided in Appendix 2, along with a summary of pertinent verbatim quotations affirming each cultural aspect and coping strategy, accessible in Appendix 3.

7.1 CULTURAL ASPECTS

7.1.1 Preference and respect for hierarchy

A first significant cultural aspect that most interviewed Western managers encountered and still have to get used to is the difference in preference and respect towards hierarchy in the Ugandan work environment compared to their country of origin. The preference for hierarchy in the host country manifests itself through diverse ways. The following outlines several ways in which this hierarchical structure is ingrained within the national culture and Ugandan work environment as perceived by the participants.

a) Top-down leadership culture vs bottom-up

“In Uganda it's just the boss deciding and the others have no word to say.” (P1)

Western managers firstly underscore the prevalent top-down leadership culture in Uganda, juxtaposing it with Western ideals of shared leadership and bottom-up approaches. A Belgian manager, drawing from experience in the Netherlands, highlights the stark contrast in this regard between the Netherlands and Uganda:

“I mean, the respect for hierarchy is also quite high in Uganda, especially compared to the Netherlands. Because in the Netherlands, people see each other more as peers. Even if you’re a manager or the CEO, I mean, people are open and approachable. Here in Uganda, there is much more respect and also distance, between the top management and the people lower in the hierarchy, in the org chart, let's say.”(P2)

A manager points out that this top-down leadership is prevalent and in fact a mirror of the political environment in Uganda:

“If I draw the line between Western leadership and African leadership, here (Uganda) is more formal. And here still the boss is a boss. And here it's all about power. They love it. If you look at the parliament of African countries, you get a little bit the mirror about the social.” (P7)

Operating within this top-down leadership culture can occasionally feel overwhelming and challenging for certain Western managers:

“So this top-down thing, this, in my view, maybe too much respect for the hierarchy, too much respect for the elderly, how nice it is, but in a work environment, it's not always easy.”(P5)

b) Decision-making styles: expectations for vertical decision-making

This preference for hierarchy also introduces a discrepancy in decision-making styles. Several Western managers underscore the distinct expectations of their local teams concerning the managerial role in decision-making. They express their personal preference as a manager for a collaborative and horizontal approach to decision-making, while acknowledging challenges in implementing this approach locally due to cultural expectations for more vertical decision-making. Given that local Ugandan managers typically employ vertical decision-making, adapting to a more horizontal approach presents a significant adjustment. Participant 4 articulates this discrepancy:

“There is a difference in the kind of role of a manager as a decision-maker versus a manager more as someone that has to, you know, guide a group into a certain direction or facilitate decision-making. And I think, well, where I come from, Belgium, there is more and more that kind of focus on

more, you know, a less vertical way of managing teams, more like a collaborative style (...). That is the idea of the organization as a whole that we try to implement. I have to say that in practice, it's often quite a challenge here.” (P4)

c) Importance of titles

Next, this respect for hierarchy also manifests in how local teams address the managers. The interviewed managers highlight the importance of titles and formal address, emphasizing the cultural value placed on hierarchy and respect. For example, some managers are called “*Mr. Regional Director*” or “*Mzee*”.

“It's very much a vertical, a vertical way of working here. You can also see that in the importance of titles, for example. You know, some people talk to me as ‘Mr. Regional Director’. And that's something that you wouldn't see in for example, Belgium.”(P4)

“It's embedded in the society: It's not bottom-up, it's really top-down, and even if we might not like it, it's the whole society, in the countryside, they call me ‘Mzee’, and that's like a nice title for an elderly person.” (P5)

d) Importance of age

In Uganda, besides using titles as a marker of hierarchical respect, age also plays a significant role in determining hierarchy. Typically, individuals are afforded greater respect based on their seniority.

“If you're an elderly, respect is given by definition, whether you're smart or not, it's your position, as an older person, to be respected.” (P5)

However, the perceived downside is that it can sometimes create friction when a younger manager leads a local team that is slightly older. Some Western managers have experienced this dynamic and have encountered phrases like “*You can't be my boss, you're younger than me, there's no way*” from older individuals upon joining the company. (P3)

Collaborating with someone older who strongly adheres to traditional hierarchical norms, poses thus a challenge. As expressed by participant 1: “*The older generation gets stuck in certain habits and it's hard to change this.*”(P1) A manager further elucidates how such individuals frequently expect others to report to them and how difficult it is to fight against that:

“When I started here, I was working with a person of 50 years. It is much harder. That was a really traditional Ugandan, someone who really values the hierarchy and totally doesn't appreciate if nobody is reporting to him

because that undermines his value, authority, or status. Maybe 'status' is the best word. You can fight against that, but that is impossible. Those people are used to that for 50 years, so for me, it is very difficult to work with those types of, let's call them, traditional people. So that is why I always go for young, dynamic profiles, and that also fits better in our company culture.”
(P2)

e) Reluctance to speaking up, question authority and being critical

Furthermore, Western managers in Uganda face challenges regarding the local team's reluctance to speak up and provide critical feedback. The interviewed managers mention instances where employees may be hesitant to openly disagree with a manager, or openly challenge an idea given by a manager due to for example hierarchical considerations. There is an ongoing effort to encourage open discussions and critical questioning within the team, as it poses a significant challenge for Western managers.

A manager expresses the frustration of encountering a lack of openness and reluctance to criticize from his team, suggesting a need for a deeper understanding of how people perceive managers in Uganda:

“A challenge is that thing of where people are a bit reluctant to give feedback and are not always speaking up (...) I think it would have been useful for me to know a bit more about how people perceive managers and how people are more reluctant to criticize, you know, the kind of lack of openness that we sometimes receive. Knowing that could have saved me some frustrations.” (P4)

Another manager contributes to this highlighting that her Ugandan staff's reluctance to question hierarchy poses a challenge. At times when she requires critical input and is uncertain about certain matters, she finds it difficult to navigate: *“Another challenge I face is the hierarchical culture here (...) Questioning hierarchies or authorities is not typical in Ugandan culture, which can make it difficult for me if I'm unsure about something.”*(P9)

Participant 3 delves deeper into the discussion by explaining that in the Ugandan culture it's not common to throw ideas. She emphasizes the challenge of speaking up in Ugandan culture due to hierarchical structures, where individuals must ensure they have permission to share their ideas. In response, participant 5 expands on this, noting that the reluctance to question authority and express criticism isn't confined to the workplace but stems from broader cultural influences, including the educational and political systems in Uganda. *“This respect for hierarchy, brings also an attitude of not questioning anything, or not being critical, (...) and even if they see it's wrong, or it's a mistake, they will continue to do it, because it was asked.*

(...) That's a pity that the critical attitude is not there, but of course, it's a cultural thing. It's also in the political system, the president who is in charge for more than four years, 40 years, so, you don't have the critical attitude there yet.” (P5)

Addressing the lack of critical thinking in the educational system, a startup manager reveals a preference for hiring non-university graduates over university graduates. Drawing from her experience with university graduates, she observes a deficiency in critical thinking and initiative, noting their tendency to wait for instructions. Conversely, individuals who did not attend university but gained practical skills from the streets demonstrate stronger problem-solving abilities. The manager opts to train and empower these individuals to fulfill the necessary tasks.(P8)

f) Innovative mindset

Lastly, Western managers also find the lack of innovativeness in Ugandan workplaces to be a significant challenge. This is a consequence of the vertical systems in which many Ugandans find themselves. For example, a manager reiterated that this lack of innovativeness is not fostered within educational systems and work contexts.

“They implement the decisions, but it's very rare that they actually come up with something new or novel. Well, they are clever people, but I think it's just not something that is stimulated. I think you have this kind of very vertical thing here. Whenever you go to university, it's someone telling you, 'this is the appropriation', and you just reproduce it. Also, in most work contexts, it's very vertical, and you don't stimulate that kind of creativity, that kind of innovativeness.”(P4)

Participant 5 further highlights the influence of uncertainty avoidance in Ugandan culture, where individuals are hesitant to take initiative and risk, contributing to the overall lack of innovativeness: *“Uncertainty avoidance, that's something that you see very much here, they will not take too much initiative.”(P5)*

7.1.2 Collectivism among peers

Next to the preference for hierarchy, another cultural aspect strongly emphasized by Western managers is the collectivism they observe among their local teams. This collectivism surpasses what they typically experience in their home countries and manifests itself in various manners.

a) Collaborative way of working

For example, a manager emphasizes that this collectivism is evident in a preference for collaborative work methods. He illustrates how his team consistently collaborates on documents, ensuring that each member's perspective is integrated at a peer level. While this

approach may not always be the most efficient, it is invaluable for incorporating diverse viewpoints among peers.

“They have very long meetings where they try to work together on a document, etc. which is not the most efficient way of doing things. But it is something that they think is the best way for them to make sure that they will incorporate everyone's views.”(P4)

b) Harmonious way of working

In addition to the collaborative approach to work, managers also observe a harmonious working dynamic among their staff, despite the diverse tribal backgrounds of local employees. They successfully collaborate under the common language of English.

“Another thing is the fact that they can all work together. Even though they're from different tribes, right? So actually, they speak different languages, but they can all speak English. So in a way, maybe we could celebrate the fact that Uganda has 50 different kingdoms or whatever, and 50 different languages, yet they manage under colonial English.” (P8)

c) Family spirit

Furthermore, certain Western managers observe a notable level of peer involvement and mutual care for each other's life events within their local teams, a factor that Western leaders should take into consideration. Additionally, it is worth mentioning the familial orientation of the culture.

“People, in general, generally care if someone loses someone, or there's a baby on the way (...) people will get together and say, what can we do. Or for people getting married, you see people getting together to really help that person to reach that goal. In our company, we can help the cousins, the brother, the friends, and hire everyone just because we all need to win.” (P3)

Expanding on the previous manager's quote about teams even assisting family members, another manager highlights that many local businesses in Uganda are family-run enterprises, fostering a strong sense of group cohesion. However, this familial dynamic also presents challenges, as some local managers may prioritize the promotion of their own family members. (P7)

d) Not setting apart from colleagues

Lastly, the participants perceived that this collective mindset also nurtures a sense of unity and security within the group, as local individuals tend to avoid standing out or differentiating

themselves from their peers. As one manager eloquently expresses: *“People also do not try to be outstanding in one way or another; so they would stay in the group, the security of the group, I think that's security; the group gives security. You look around, and you're not going to differ yourself too much from the other colleagues”*(P5). According to the manager, while everyone desires promotion and increased income, they are not inclined to adopt a “stand out” approach, hoping to be noticed. Which is more common in their Western background.

7.1.3 Time orientation

A third cultural disparity arises from the observation made by Western managers, who often encounter a more time-driven approach in their own cultural background. This sharply contrasts with the more relaxed attitude towards punctuality in Uganda, particularly concerning meeting deadlines. A manager encapsulates this difference, stating: *“The concept of a deadline is very different, like they used to say, you have to watch, we have time. If you say: ‘hey, guys, that should be finished by that time’, you get like a very first draft by the deadlines.”* (P5)

Another manager echoes the exact same quote and elaborates on his challenge making his local team meet global deadlines: *“There is a phrase that says in Europe people have a watch, in Africa people have time. That is definitely applicable. Here, if it's not done today, then people will do it tomorrow. Of course, we need to meet certain deadlines and expectations from our customers in Europe. That is a constant battle to incentivize people to do things on time. And with the right quality, etc. Because that's our main challenge.”* (P2)

Participant 2 also underscores that this time orientation difference is prevalent in the culture and even goes further by suggesting it as a reason why some local companies fail: *“I think that's one of the reasons why many businesses struggle in Uganda to make a sustainable profit. In my view, the speed of their operations is just too slow.”* (P2) Furthermore, participant 3 elaborates on this, highlighting that one reason for this phenomenon is the fear of disappointing others. Often, local workers face difficulties along the way and realize they won't meet the deadline, but instead of addressing the issue proactively, they wait until the deadline because they are afraid of disappointing others. *“People here fear telling others they can't meet the deadline because they worry people would be disappointed, so they prefer not to say anything and wait until the deadline to see what happens instead of being proactive.”*(P3)

However a manager working for a multinational brewery company didn't seem to have the same experience regarding time orientation, for her it strongly depends on the corporate culture. (P6) Similarly, participant 9 acknowledges the difference in the perception of time in general, but also emphasizes that the impact of this cultural aspect also varies depending on the organization's structure. In the company where she works, internal time delays are not

tolerated due to established structures. However, when interacting with smaller external partners, differences in the perception of time may become apparent. (P9)

7.1.4 Difference on efficiency as a parameter for work

“There are cultural disparities in the perception of work quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. It is a challenge to maintain Western standards of quality and efficiency in the work environment.” (P5)

Additionally, Western managers noticed a difference in the emphasis on efficiency between Western management styles and local practices. The Western managers note that there is a Western tendency to prioritize efficiency and move forward quickly, which may differ from local perspectives.

Reflecting on this, participant 4, suggests that while efficiency is often valued in Western organizations, it's not necessarily a universal standard: *“I think there are differences when it comes to how much we focus on efficiency, for example, right? To what extent efficiency is what should really be the parameter for work. I think that is a major difference that I see sometimes, (...) and I don't think there's any good or bad in that sometimes. Of course, efficiency is something that is valued in an organization often.”(P4)*

He further elaborates on the Western emphasis on efficiency, noting potential drawbacks: *“But at the same time, I do think sometimes, you know, in our Western background, we're too much focused on keeping things efficient and trying to move forward as fast as possible. Well, that's not always the best way forward, nor is it always very healthy for work-life balance or the kind of pressure we put on ourselves.”(P4)*

7.1.5 Difference in communication styles

a) Personal connection when communicating

A fifth cultural aspect observed by the participants revolves around the different ways of communicating in Uganda. The interviewees namely observe that Westerners tend to favor straightforward communication in professional settings, often skipping personal inquiries such as asking about well-being in work-related emails. In contrast, Ugandans commonly include personal pleasantries before addressing business matters, reflecting a cultural emphasis on politeness and personal connections in communication. This highlights a difference in communication norms between the two cultures. A manager reflects on this adjustment stating: *“I had to get used to it. We were very direct, so in an email the first question now would be: 'I hope you're well.' I would never do that in Belgium; it would feel almost like intruding on somebody's personal life. I'm just approaching you in a work-related context, so you would not often do that. Here, it's standard. Of course, it doesn't always carry much weight, this standard thing, but in the beginning, I really had to get used to it.” (P5)*

b) Delivering feedback

“I need to be careful that negative feedback is better to deliver in a one-on-one situation, so sometimes we as management, including myself, make mistakes in this regard.” (P2)

Additionally, within the scope of different communication practices, a notable distinction highlighted by managers pertains to the delivery of negative feedback. It is emphasized that such feedback is more appropriately conveyed privately to local staff rather than in a group setting. Participant 3 elaborates and explains that she has frequently observed Western managers making the mistake of giving negative feedback in a group setting: *“Being very direct, especially in a meeting environment, calling someone out in front of others, which is kind of humiliating in any way, that's definitely not appreciated, and things are taken very personal here. So I've seen certain Western managers talking very direct (...). But then they say, no, but this is work, after work, we go have a beer together, and everything is fine. But the thing is, here it doesn't really work that way.” (P3)*

Managers additionally stressed that delivering corrective feedback to Ugandan colleagues in a group setting made their teams uncomfortable, leading to a reconsideration of their communication approach within the local work environment.

c) Indirect communication

Next, Western managers highlight a tendency in Ugandan communication for indirectness, such as saying "yes" even when individuals may not fully understand or agree. This contrasts with the direct communication style often seen in their Western background, leading to confusion and challenges in determining true consensus during meetings. Different participants note that it's often hard to understand if people are agreeing or not in Ugandan work environments. They express that while it may seem like everyone is in agreement, in reality, this may not be the case: *“A yes is a no; it looks like everybody's agreeing, and afterwards, I understand, maybe not everybody was on the same page, but it will not be clear in the meeting.” (P5)*

Furthermore, a manager highlights the issue of team members always saying yes even when they haven't fully grasped the question: *“On the other hand, the main challenge is that people always say yes. Even if they don't understand something, they say yes. So, if you ask the question, did you understand it? They will always say yes.”(P4)* Consequently, managers emphasize the importance of interpreting the non-verbal behavior of local employees, as verbal affirmations are not always reliable.

7.1.6 Cultural etiquette and traditional protocol in the workplace

“If we have a meeting, especially if we have more people in a large group, we have to do the introductions... You can have meetings here with government officials, for example, where the first two hours is just introductions. It's not something that I think is great, but it's how things are done here. It wastes a lot of time.”(P5)

Western managers furthermore state that in workplace interactions in Uganda, formalities such as extensive introductions and starting meetings with prayers are common, though some Western managers find them time-consuming. However, these practices are acknowledged for their role in setting the scene and fostering shared goals. Additionally, there's a cultural emphasis on hospitality, with providing lunch for external guests during meetings seen as essential. Western managers may struggle with these customs, such as covering expenses for government officials, but recognize the importance of adhering to local traditions for successful outcomes. As participant 5 highlights it enables efficiency through relationship building: *“The introductions, it's like opening a little bit, meaning sometimes it's not bad. There are certain advantages, because you can set the scene, everybody is like, oh, a common goal, what are we doing here today, where do we want to go to (...) This ritual allows us to set the tone. So, while it may not be efficient, in the traditional sense it promotes efficiency through relationship-building, which is more important in this context.”(P5)*

7.1.7 Difference in tolerance for mistakes

A last cultural aspect pointed out by Western managers is the culture of no second chances in lots of Ugandan companies which is deeply ingrained in their local teams and influences their behavior.

“In the Western world, we follow a different protocol we typically see a progression from a minor error ‘slip’, to a mistake, and then to a violation of rules. Here (Uganda), however, they have a different approach. They primarily see mistakes as violations, leading to swift job termination.”(P7)

This highlights the significant divergence in perspectives regarding error tolerance and disciplinary actions between Western and Ugandan management culture. A manager emphasizes this sentiment, stating: *“Here in Uganda it's very much like you make a mistake, you get fired.”(P6)* This cultural disparity may also clarify the fear of disappointment experienced by local staff, as they fear job termination.

7.2 COPING STRATEGIES

Given that the cultural aspects perceived by Western managers in Uganda have been explored, the second question arises: how do these managers navigate these cultural differences when

leading local teams? Coping strategies are essential for Western managers operating in Africa to effectively navigate cultural differences and enhance leadership effectiveness. In the literature, the term “crossvergence” has been discussed, which refers to the blending of Western and African practices. What coping strategies do Western managers consider effective in enhancing their leadership effectiveness and how can crossvergence aid these managers?

7.2.1 Stimulating an innovate mindset and horizontal decision-making by taking the backseat as a leader

A first coping strategy that arose through the discussions with the managers is taking a backseat as a leader, to stimulate an innovative mindset and horizontal decision-making in the local team, as this is currently a challenge. By relinquishing control and allowing team members to take the lead in decision-making processes, managers empower them to contribute actively and adapt solutions according to their insights and expertise. As articulated by participant 4: *“I think it is my duty as a manager to stimulate that mindset somehow, and what I do is I just try to take the backseat. I just put them on the forefront, and I'll tell them, it's up to you to do it, because I cannot take decisions on everything, especially on things that I know very little about compared to them, so that's something that I often try to do.”* (P4) Participant 4 further elaborates on his approach, emphasizing the importance of not micromanaging and instead encouraging autonomy within the local team: *“They try to bring me into meetings where decisions are being made, while I'm actually not supposed to be in that kind of meeting, so I tell them, you take a decision, and let me know what comes out. Just report back at some point, but it's not up to me to always take their hand, accompany them, because when I would be at a meeting, they will be looking at me, and they're not up there. And so, that's something that I try to do.”* (P4)

7.2.2 Creating a safe environment

Another coping mechanism for navigating cultural differences is establishing a safe environment as a Western leader, particularly by fostering psychological safety. As highlighted by one manager, individuals in Uganda often harbor a fear of disappointing others, and the culture generally lacks a tradition of affording second chances, leaving some employees apprehensive about potential job loss. Therefore, creating an open space where team members feel comfortable speaking up, asking questions, admitting mistakes, and where immediate termination is not the default response is crucial.

Different managers emphasize this:

“They need to have that safe space, for people to dare say, I've not understood that, I don't know how to do that, and I need your advice on this. That's really important, and I think that's not even just here, actually, I think

it also comes from when you're in school, and you're a child, back then, and, every time you say something wrong, you get caned, physically.”(P3)

“Like it's making, you know, let's say the psychological safety important, to say, if you push back, if you make a mistake, it's ok, we'll figure it out together. Which is normally here very much like, you make a mistake, you get fired.” (P6)

Next, participant 9 employs subgroups to foster a secure environment where staff members can openly express their opinions, acknowledging that soliciting feedback in a large group setting can be challenging. By allowing discussions in smaller, safer environments, individuals feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas (P9). Additionally, one manager emphasizes maintaining accessibility and promoting open communication without making it overly formal (P2). Another manager also underscores the importance of open communication, emphasizing its positive impact on both himself and his team. He explains: *“So I communicate with them, which ends up better for me because I get their input, which is valuable as they're experienced at what they're doing. And also they get my input and they're learning also from that.”(P1)*

7.2.3 Adapting communication style

a) Avoid “yes or no” questions

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, a common faced challenge in Ugandan culture is the indirect tendency for local staff to respond with "yes" even when they haven't fully understood something. One manager underscores the ineffectiveness of asking yes or no questions, as they frequently elicit superficial responses. Instead, they recommend posing open-ended questions that encourage individuals to offer explanations, fostering mutual comprehension. *“So, if you ask the question, did you understand it? They will always say yes. So, in a way, that is, I learned for myself, that is a silly question. You don't need to ask that. You need to ask; can you repeat in your own words now what has to be done or can you summarize it?” (P4)*

b) Equal conversation

Additionally, a Western manager observes that in Uganda, conversations are often conducted with a parental tone. However, the manager emphasizes the significance of fostering an environment of equality in dialogue.

“And sometimes people talk like a parent. If I talk to you like a parent, for instance, put you in the position of a child, I will say, “don't do.” That's not good. So you have to have an equal conversation, actually.”(P7)

c) Adapting language

Next, participants highlight the importance of approaching conversations from various perspectives. They emphasize the need to adjust their language and presentation style based on the audience they are addressing. Adapting language, for example, also involves embracing a more collectivist approach to communication. In a collectivist culture like Uganda, effective communication requires dedicating time to ensure everyone is aligned and information is conveyed comprehensively. As one manager puts it: *“It's like spending a lot more time on getting everyone on board and making sure that everyone understands, on making sure that I am communicating fairly and using as few idioms as possible. So it's kind of like, it's almost like slowing my work down a bit. Am I asking in a couple of different ways? And I think it's also like, even in the way that I speak and the way that I present. The way that many people here speak, it's almost more storytelling. You repeat the same points many times (...), you use your hands, you just take different stances.”* (P6)

7.2.4 Building personal relationships

Another coping strategy emphasized by the Western managers is the importance of building personal relationship with the local team, identified as a crucial aspect of effective leadership within the African context. The managers discuss the emphasis on family culture and recommend to be inclusive early on, as strategies for successful relationship-building. *“As a Western manager, you have to build on your relationship with the person. Have a good personal relationship with the person and then you will get a good professional one. If you start to build up first your professional relationship, you're going to forget about your personal one.”* (P7)

7.2.5 Mitigating the difference in time orientation

a) Remind and Train

Furthermore regarding the cultural difference in the notion of time, a manager emphasizes the importance of consistently reminding team members about punctuality expectations required by the company. *“Remind them from time to time that it's important. For example, if there is a MS Teams call like we do now, especially in Europe or in Belgium, it's not polite if you dial in five minutes too late. Two minutes, people would already apologize. Where here in Uganda. I barely had a meeting started on time. (...) So that is something we worked hard on.”* (P2) Another manager agrees and simply feels that training local staff on the value of time is sufficient. They assert: *“You need to train them. Once they see that it's a better way to behave, they'll understand. They're not stupid; they're just like us. They can learn about time and efficiency.”* (P8)

b) Accept

However, participant 2 further explains that when external people arrive late, he simply adapts and copes with it, as it's something beyond his control, stating: *“I also need to adjust to that. If I don't, I'll just stress myself out. To some extent, I can't change those people, and I don't need to. It's part of Ugandan culture, so I don't have to strive to change it. I can manage it to some extent internally, but if it's external, I just have to deal with it.”* (P2)

Another manager complements this approach by viewing the awareness and acceptance of differences in the notion of time as a prerequisite for working effectively in the Ugandan context. *“I think it's difficult to cope with, but I would consider it a precondition to be able to react promptly to whatever may arise. (...) being a very time-oriented, structured person who always follows a certain plan could create difficulties in this work environment.”* (P9)

c) Understand local staff

Next participant 8 adds some nuances to the matter and emphasizes the importance of understanding the local context and the limitations of Western time standards in certain situations. They stress that what works in the West may not be applicable locally, highlighting the need for managers to adapt and localize their approach. For instance, blaming employees for being late due to factors like rain without considering their transportation challenges is unproductive. Instead, managers should adjust schedules and provide support where necessary, such as arranging transportation during adverse weather conditions. This understanding, they argue, is crucial for effective management and prevents counterproductive outcomes. (P8) *“If it rains and your staff have no transport, yelling at them because they are late due to rain won't accomplish anything. So either you provide transport, right? Or you just know that if it rains, they have no way of getting here. So you have to adjust your schedule.”* (P8)

7.2.6 Expectations management

Another strategy that arose is managing expectations. This strategy of expectations management involves striking a balance between setting realistic expectations and allowing flexibility in achieving desired outcomes. Western managers working in Uganda recognize the need to adjust their expectations to align with the local culture, which may prioritize different approaches to work and outcomes. As one manager puts it: *“You should not set your expectations too high. I mean, if I'm going to organize a conference in Belgium, and I really want to achieve a specific outcome, I might plan very meticulously to ensure it happens. But here, it's more like, 'let's see what the outcome will be.' Regardless of the outcome, you have to be content with it because you can't force it. So, you have to go with the flow, and that's a skill.”* (P7) This is echoed by participant 6 stating: *“Cause oftentimes, you know, you want the*

cattle, you want the fancy, you want the best version possible, but you don't need the best version possible. So you begin to kind of accept, let's say the minimum viable product.”(P6)

7.2.7 Cultural adjustment and crossvergence

In essence, cultural adaptation is essential for successfully managing cultural differences. Western leaders, especially in diverse environments such as Uganda, face the challenge of balancing adherence to organizational norms, their own identity and adapting to local customs.

Crossvergence refers to the process of adaptation to a new cultural environment, wherein individuals blend elements of their own cultural background with those of the host culture. In the context of Ugandan culture, Western managers demonstrate adaptability by integrating collectivist leadership approaches, modifying their communication styles, and prioritizing relationship-building, all of which are valued in Ugandan society. However, it's essential to note that adaptation does not equate to complete adoption. As highlighted by participant 9: *“I think full adaptation is not possible. It's a matter of sensitivity to recognize where the differences lie, where the boundaries are that cannot be crossed, or behaviors that are entirely inappropriate. You have to be very sensitive to the fact that you're in a different culture, while also understanding your own identity and knowing where your own boundaries lie. I think it's also quite important to know where you can adapt, but also what you need for your own well-being or mental health. I believe this awareness and sensitivity are crucial when you're operating in a context and a culture that are very different from the one you grew up in.”(P9)*

Western managers thus often retain certain aspects of their original cultural background, particularly if they align with the corporate culture of the organization they represent..

“And so for us, we always say we, we get the best of both worlds, the best of what we can learn from the West and the best way of doing it locally.” (P8)

“It's neither good nor bad; it's just different. It's not a matter of one way being better than the other; they're simply different. I aim to find a middle ground between our corporate culture and the national culture. I'll strive to accept certain aspects while also ensuring that our organization maintains Belgian standards.”(P5)

For example, a manager acknowledges that although she has adopted a more collectivist approach and integrated collectivism into her communication style, there are instances where she inadvertently leans towards individualism. She finds herself urging her team to claim individual credit alongside collective recognition for their achievements, in alignment with corporate culture expectations. She calls it being “American”: *“It's funny, actually, when you asked the question, like, I often actually call it being American. You know, like I'll say:*

'Rogers, be more American.' Like take credit for everything that you have achieved. You know, and explicitly saying, you know, guys, it's okay to brag about what you have done. You can't always say 'We' did this, did that.' (P6)

Other managers observe that the focus on maintaining strict structure and efficiency may not be ingrained in Ugandan culture as it is in Western cultures, yet they acknowledge the importance of embracing diversity in work approaches. One manager articulates this need to strike a balance between respecting Ugandan work customs while integrating certain organizational “Western” standards for efficiency: *“I think structure is important. Like, meetings shouldn't take hours and hours and hours. I mean, there has to be still a kind of focus on efficiency sometimes. Like, when we have a meeting, I want an agenda, I want activity codes, you know, this kind of very formalistic things, but I do think that that's important. (...) You need, to push people to be a bit organized and to respect procedures while at the same time also being sufficiently open that people have different ways of working and that things might take a bit more time, but that actually, you know, you'll get there maybe even in a better way than how you would do it in Europe.”*(P4)

Chapter 8: Discussion of results

8.1 Interpretation of results

The section above presented in a structured manner the results of the research. Subsequently, this section aims to engage in a discussion of the empirical findings to address the research question: Which cultural factors influence the effectiveness of leadership among Western managers in Uganda, and how do they cope with these cultural disparities? Commencing with an examination of the cultural aspects perceived by the Western managers, the discussion focuses on elucidating the distinctions between Western and Ugandan managerial cultures and work environments, juxtaposed with insights from the literature. While certain aspects may resonate with previous research others may diverge from it and there may be facets that were not previously addressed in scholarly works. A summary of this comparative analysis between literature and empirical findings is provided in Appendix 4 for reference.

8.1.1 Cultural aspects

A notable aspect highlighted in both the literature and interview discussions is the contrasting preference for hierarchy between Western and African managerial cultures, stating a high power distance in African cultures. Nonetheless, in the literature, researcher Rarick used Hofstede's framework to indicate a low power distance index (PDI score of 38) for Ugandan culture, suggesting a tendency towards less hierarchical structures in Uganda (Rarick et al., 2013). However, the perceptions of interviewed Western managers contradict Rarick's findings. According to their experiences, Ugandan work culture actually emphasizes hierarchy, favoring top-down, authoritarian leadership, in contrast to the shared or egalitarian leadership preferred by Western managers. This disparity is also evident in the decision-

making process, where Ugandan teams often expect directives from higher authorities, while Western managers tend to engage the entire team in decision-making processes. Another notable hierarchical aspect perceived in the Ugandan context is the reverence for elders as symbols of authority and expertise in the workplace. This aligns with Beugré's assertion that age commands greater respect in Africa (Beugré, 2001). Western managers often struggle with the prevalent preference for hierarchy in Ugandan workplaces, as it tends to discourage open communication and criticism of authority due to hierarchical norms. This reluctance to speak up or challenge authority is a common challenge highlighted by the participants, echoing the sentiments expressed by Kuada in the literature. Namely, Kuada suggests that such hierarchical structures restrict the empowerment of workers (Kuada, 2005), hindering their ability to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

Moreover, when instructions consistently originate from the top, it fosters a lack of initiative among local workers and stifles their innovative mindset, as they become overly reliant on directives rather than thinking independently. The interviewees linked this phenomenon of lacking initiative to a culture of high uncertainty avoidance prevalent in Uganda. The perceptions of the interviewed managers suggest that the Ugandan work environment is notably risk-averse, as the local hierarchical, formal, and change-averse mindset influences the risk-taking attitude of local employees. This should align with expectations for a higher index on uncertainty avoidance, as confirmed by Beugré (Beugré, 2010). However, Rarick's research, in contrast, attributed a relatively moderate index of 56 to uncertainty avoidance in Uganda (Rarick et al., 2013). Further research should examine the extent to which moderate uncertainty accurately reflects the Ugandan work environment and whether it might actually lean towards higher uncertainty. Additionally, it could explore why Belgian managers, coming from a high uncertainty avoidance culture (UAI score of 94) with many rules, structure, and norms, still experience a local difference in the risk-taking behavior of Ugandan employees compared to their home country (Country Comparison Tool, 2023). This is an aspect that is not entirely clear and requires consideration of other factors. As highlighted in the literature review, there is very little research on the uncertainty avoidance dimension in Africa.

Furthermore, in addition to the preference for hierarchy, another cultural aspect that emerged both in the literature and the interviews is the disparity in collectivism between Western and African managerial cultures. As noted by Guma, Western managers often prioritize individual achievement and tend to exhibit more self-serving and individualistic behaviors (Guma, 2012). Conversely, African cultures, including Uganda, prioritize collectivism. The Western managers agree with the literature on collectivism and elucidate that there is a harmonious collaboration among peers in their Ugandan teams, with emphasis on collaborative work methods and strong support for personal life events. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on African community and Ubuntu values, which foster a strong sense of obligation to care

for one another (Whyte, 2018). Additionally, Western managers notice a reluctance among their Ugandan team members to differentiate themselves from their colleagues, fostering a collective sense of security. This observation aligns perfectly with the avoidance of individualistic competition in African managerial cultures, as emphasized by Mbigi (Mbigi, 2005). In contrast, Western managerial cultures typically place high value on individual distinction. As such, it could be argued that Uganda exhibits characteristics of a feminine culture rather than a masculine one, contradicting research by Rarick (Rarick et al., 2013). Companies that embrace a corporate culture emphasizing individual achievements must therefore navigate a delicate balance in reconciling corporate culture with the prevailing local work culture in Uganda.

Furthermore, beyond the discussion on collectivism, another notable difference highlighted by the participants is the concept of efficiency which, however, received limited attention in the literature. The participants acknowledge the prevalent emphasis on efficient working in their Western backgrounds but perceive it as lacking in the local work environment.

An additional aspect highlighted by Western managers and confirmed in the literature is the disparity in time perception (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). Western managers typically prioritize punctuality and adhere to strict timelines. In contrast, Ugandan culture demonstrates a more relaxed attitude toward time orientation. A significant challenge for Western managers is ensuring their teams meet deadlines and manage time effectively within the context of Ugandan work culture. Although this cultural aspect is ingrained in many African cultures, the impact of it was not observed by all the interviewed managers. The extent to which managers experience cultural aspects also depends on the structure of the company in which they operate. For instance, a manager in a development organization notes that their company has structures in place that obscure the local differences in time orientation on the work floor. This indicates a need for further research in this area.

Besides time perception, differences in communication styles were also confirmed during discussions with managers, aligning with findings in the literature. Western managers noted that in their cultural background, direct communication is more prevalent. However, as highlighted in the literature, many African cultures tend to favor indirect communication and have a high-context culture (Abugre, 2018). This means that a “yes” could potentially convey different meanings depending on contextual cues, such as body language, and might even indicate a lack of understanding rather than agreement. Furthermore, there exists a notable divergence in the tolerance for mistakes, as Western managers observe swift termination practices in Ugandan culture compared to their Western backgrounds, where such actions are less frequent. Interestingly, this cultural aspect was not extensively discussed in the literature.

Additionally, Western managers who oversee local teams highlight further cultural intricacies that haven't received ample attention in the literature, including the significance of formalities within the local work etiquette. Reflecting on efficiency, numerous managers express reservations about the efficacy of certain formalities like group prayers or prolonged introductions. Nevertheless, they recognize that in Uganda, efficiency takes on a nuanced meaning, it revolves around nurturing shared goals and fostering interpersonal relationships, in alignment with the humanistic perspective of African cultures elucidated by Kuada (Kuada, 2005).

Ultimately, the most important cultural dimensions highlighted by the interviewed managers are the high power distance and high collectivism observed in Uganda as these dimensions are intertwined with various other mentioned cultural aspects and were particularly emphasized by the interviewed managers.

8.1.2 Coping strategies

The second question concerns how these Western managers cope with the perceived cultural differences.

In the literature, the concept of crossvergence was discussed as a response to the unacceptance of Western management as universal valid (Mufune, 2003). The interviewed managers echoed this sentiment, asserting that merely implementing Western managerial approaches in the Ugandan context is ineffective. However, they also note that blindly adopting Ugandan culture can also lead to problems in efficiently leading local teams. Adaptation is important but not necessarily full adoption. Furthermore, the coping mechanisms discussed in the theoretical framework, particularly problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, mirror the strategies identified in the findings of this research.

Problem-focused coping strategies involve directly addressing the root causes of stress or issues within teams. One example of this is when Western managers take a step back to allow their teams to lead, stimulating innovative thinking and demonstrating their knowledge of the local context. This horizontal approach addresses the lack of input and decision support typically experienced by Western managers from their local teams. Additionally, managers prioritize open communication and create a safe environment for local team members to speak up, challenge authority, admit mistakes, and contribute effectively without fear of repercussions. They also adapt communication styles, dedicating more time to ensure full engagement from the local team and valuing local communication norms (Abugre, 2018). Furthermore, promoting equal conversations where every voice is valued is crucial. While the literature acknowledges the existence of a parental culture in African work contexts, some Western managers perceive such behavior observed in their counterparts as unacceptable (Beugré, 2001). As one participant articulated, *"If I talk to you like a parent, for instance,*

putting you in the position of a child, I will say, don't do. That's not good. You have to have an equal conversation."(P7) Moreover, Western managers integrate relationship-building into their local teams, echoing the literature's suggestion that prioritizing relationship-building leads to greater long-term benefits than merely focusing on technical expertise (Amoako-Agyei, 2009).

In terms of emotion-focused coping, Western managers navigate perceived cultural differences by regulating emotional responses to stressful situations. Managing expectations is one such coping mechanism employed by Western managers to deal with cultural differences. This involves accepting that outcomes may unfold differently than they would in their home countries and allowing flexibility in achieving desired results. By doing so, managers address the emotional distress that can arise when faced with unexpected outcomes or cultural discrepancies. Additionally, accepting is crucial when it comes to time orientation. Managers must handle frustrations related to time and be willing to overlook some issues to maintain a harmonious work environment and mitigate emotional strain associated with conflicting time management practices.

Furthermore regarding crossvergence, Western managers stress the importance to listen to the needs of the business. For example, for a plant nursery serving Belgian clients, timely delivery is crucial, meaning finding a balance between corporate needs and Ugandan culture is important. Consistently reminding the local team about punctuality expectations helps bridge the gap between different time orientations. Similarly, when corporate culture prioritizes individual achievement, a hybrid approach is necessary. Celebrating both collective successes and individual accomplishments fosters mutual support and recognition within the team. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the alignment between corporate culture and national or local culture, as it influences how managers navigate cultural differences.

Lastly, it is noteworthy to mention that adaptation tends to be more manageable for managers with experience in diverse cultural environments, as they have honed their cross-cultural communication skills. For instance, one manager illustrates this point by sharing her own background. She identifies as Belgian but has lived in Taiwan, France, and the USA. Despite occasional challenges, she emphasizes her adeptness at navigating various cultural contexts due to her experiences. (P8)

8.2 Managerial Implications

The findings of this research carry significant implications for managers operating in cross-cultural environments, particularly when leading local teams in Uganda. Firstly, cultural awareness is critical in effectively navigating the complexities of cross-cultural leadership. Western managers should prioritize ongoing cultural education and preparation both before

and during their international assignments. This can involve familiarizing themselves with Ugandan cultural norms, values, and communication styles to build rapport and foster effective collaboration with local teams. The various cultural aspects highlighted in this research contribute to increasing this awareness. Furthermore, incorporating the diverse strategies outlined in this research can improve managers' capacity to navigate cultural differences. Managers must recognize that cross-cultural environments are nuanced and require finding a balance to address cultural clashes effectively.

Lastly, the importance of managerial training cannot be overstated in facilitating effective leadership in cross-cultural settings. Investing in managerial training programs that focus on developing essential skills like emotional intelligence (EQ) can equip managers with the competencies needed to thrive in diverse work environments. As highlighted by one participant, the ability to read the room can be just as crucial, if not more so, than merely recognizing cultural differences. (P6) Therefore, providing managers with opportunities to enhance their EQ significantly contribute to their effectiveness in leading multicultural teams.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Limitations of the study

Several limitations constrain the scope and generalizability of this research. Firstly, it is essential to acknowledge that the insights gained from this study do not encapsulate the entirety of Western managers in Uganda, thus limiting its applicability to a broader population. While serving as a foundational framework for future research and aiding Western managers currently navigating cultural challenges, it does not claim to offer a universal representation. Additionally, the small sample size of nine managers interviewed poses challenges in extrapolating findings to a wider context, emphasizing the need for caution when generalizing conclusions to the broader population of Western managers in Africa. To counter these limitations several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, diversification of the sample should be pursued by expanding the participant pool to include a broader range of Western managers from various nationalities and backgrounds. This can be achieved by reaching out to different expat groups, professional networks, or utilizing purposive sampling techniques. Secondly, increasing the sample size by conducting additional interviews with a larger number of Western managers will enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation arises from the predominantly Belgian composition of the pool of Western managers involved. Only one manager was of German origin, and one was American. These three represent distinct Western cultures, each with its own nuances. While this thesis found their perspectives on cultural differences in Uganda to be relatively homogeneous, further investigation is necessary to substantiate this claim. Furthermore, it's important to note the significant gap in empirically-based research concerning the cultural classification of Uganda.

This study leaned heavily on Rarick's work, which stands as the solitary application of Hofstede's framework to Uganda. However, Rarick's approach diverged from Hofstede's original methodology, particularly in the aspect of sample heterogeneity. As a result, the findings presented in this thesis do not entirely coincide with those of Rarick's research. Hence, it becomes evident that there is a pressing necessity for further research endeavors aimed at achieving a more comprehensive understanding of Uganda's cultural classification.

Finally, a notable limitation arises from the inherent complexity of cross-cultural research, which can introduce biases, particularly concerning cultural aspects. This raises questions about the extent to which a cultural element can truly be attributed to culture, introducing subjectivity into the analysis. Additionally, the literature is often replete with generalizations, employing broad terms like "Western" and "African" that may oversimplify diverse cultures. Moreover, despite numerous studies on cultural aspects and leadership, researchers have noted that the results often remain ambiguous and contradictory (Iguisi, 2009). Such inconsistencies in findings underscore the ongoing challenges in fully addressing the complexities of cross-cultural research.

9.2 Future research

Other future avenues for research in this area could explore several directions to deepen the understanding of cross-cultural leadership dynamics in Africa. Firstly, besides investigating the perceptions of Western managers also investigating those of local teams regarding cultural aspects would offer valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural adaptation and collaboration within multicultural work environments. Namely, understanding how local employees perceive Western managers' leadership and cultural integration efforts can provide a comprehensive picture and lessons for cross-cultural leadership effectiveness in the country.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to differentiate the study based on the tenure of Western managers in Uganda. As one participant noted, managers may undergo a process of "Africanization" over time, adapting their leadership and behaviors to align more closely with local norms and expectations.(P3) Exploring how managers' experiences and length of stay in the host country influence their leadership approaches and cultural adaptation strategies can shed light on the complexities of cross-cultural leadership development.

Next, the effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by the Western managers was not examined in this study. Therefore, future research could explore the efficacy of the coping strategies employed by these managers.

Moreover, extending the research to include Western managers in other African countries would enable comparative analyses across different cultural contexts. By examining the challenges faced by Western managers in diverse African settings, researchers can identify

commonalities and differences in cross-cultural leadership experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of cultural influences on leadership effectiveness across the continent. As the findings of this research are limited to Uganda and since Africa is a continent with 53 countries, communalities may exist but also lots of cultural differences. Finally, as previously noted, future research could delve into how company size, company structure, company industry and corporate culture influence the extent to which Western managers perceive cultural differences in the local work environment.

9.3 General conclusion

In conclusion, this research fills an academic gap by providing valuable insights into the cultural aspects influencing the effectiveness of Western managers leading local teams in Uganda. Through structured analysis and discussion, it has become evident that significant cultural disparities exist between Western managerial norms and those prevalent in Ugandan work environments. One of the central themes identified is the contrasting preferences for hierarchy, with Ugandan work culture often emphasizing top-down, authoritarian leadership styles, contrary to the shared or egalitarian approaches favored by Western managers. This discrepancy poses challenges in decision-making processes and stifles innovation among local team members.

Additionally, the collectivistic nature of African managerial cultures, including Uganda, contrasts with the individualistic tendencies of Western managers. Moreover, differences in time perception, communication styles, adherence to work etiquette formalities and tolerance for mistakes further underscore the complexity of leading local teams in Uganda. The coping mechanisms employed by Western managers, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, play a crucial role in navigating these cultural differences and fostering effective leadership. The value of this research lies in its potential to serve as a practical guide and peer-learning resource for Western managers venturing into Uganda to lead local teams. By drawing on the experiences of managers in similar roles, this thesis offers insights that can help future Western managers prepare for the unique challenges of leading local teams in Uganda. It serves as a template for understanding cultural nuances and fostering effective leadership practices tailored to the local context. Moreover, by providing perspectives from a diverse range of managers interviewed in the study, this research encourages peer-to-peer discussions and knowledge sharing among managers facing similar challenges. Therefore, this research not only fills an academic gap by addressing the absence of the cross-cultural perceptions of Western managers in Uganda but also provides tangible value to prospective practitioners seeking success in cross-cultural work contexts.

Chapter 10: Use of ChatGPT

I authored every section of this thesis independently. While I utilized ChatGPT primarily for spell-checking and refining sentence structure, its role was limited to enhancing clarity and coherence of sentences, rather than contributing to the substantive content.

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